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YM 670 Postmodern Youth Ministry

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**YM670 – Postmodern Youth Ministry
August 2006**

Area of Christian Discipleship and Leadership
Assistant Professor: Jim Hampton
Office Hours: By appointment during this class
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August 7-10, 2004, 8:30am-4pm
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2 hours credit
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The issues of adolescence, after all, are the issues of being human, in acute form. All human beings long for something “to die for.” All human beings must convert to a truth worthy of enduring commitment, a truth that makes life worth living and, yes, death worth dying. Adolescents seek this truth instinctively, incessantly, and intuitively simply because they must. Postmodern adolescents will not settle for generic, relative truth. When we are honest, neither will we.

Kenda Creasy Dean, “X-Files and Unknown Gods: The Search for Truth with Postmodern Adolescents,” American Baptist Quarterly (2000)

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course explores the dynamics of living in a postmodern culture and its attendant impact on the church and its ministry to adolescents. The focus is on developing a theology of youth ministry which takes seriously the unique needs of postmodern students, and then look at how that theology should culminate in specific practices of ministry to youth. Special attention is given to the fact that we are living “between worlds” and how our ministries need to become bi-lingual, speaking both the language of faith and the language of culture. (Catalog statement)

II. PLACE OF COURSE IN THE CURRICULUM:

This is an elective course and is open to any student who has taken either CD 510, CM 510 or YM 510 or with permission of the instructor.

III. COURSE OBJECTIVES:

As a result of taking this class students will be able to:

1. Identify postmodern issues that impact the church’s ministry to adolescents.
2. Demonstrate how one’s local context (geographical, cultural, and theological) can impact how postmodern issues are fleshed out.
3. Critically evaluate from a Wesleyan theological perspective the various models addressing postmodern youth ministry.
4. Formulate a philosophy of youth ministry that takes seriously the need to minister to both modern and postmodern students and works itself out in specific ministry practices for youth.

IV. REQUIRED READING

Textbooks

Jones, Tony. Postmodern Youth Ministry. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001. 223 pages
Newbigin, Leslie. The Gospel in a Pluralist Society. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989. 255 pages.
Sweet, Leonard; Crouch, Andy; McLaren, Brian; and McManus, Erwin (eds.). Church in Emerging Culture: Five Perspectives. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003. 256 pages

Ward, Pete. Liquid Church. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002. 98 pages

NOTE: ALL OF THESE TEXTS NEED TO BE READ BEFORE THE START OF CLASS!

Articles

Baker, Tim. (2003). Building a Bridge: The Frustration Between Theory and Practice. Youthworker Journal. 20:1, 54-56.

Roebben, B. (1997). Shaping a Playground for Transcendence: Postmodern Youth Ministry as a Radical Challenge. Religious Education. 92:3, 332-347.

Zaher, Holly R. (2003). Do We Need Youth Ministry Any More? Youthworker Journal. 19:6, 20-21.

In addition, we will look at other articles as deemed appropriate by the professor and passed out in class.

V. COURSE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

1. Regular class attendance and participation is expected since much of our class time will center on a dialogical format. A cooperative learning environment will govern our class time. Therefore, student participation is very much a part of the learning experience.
2. The course requirements will be the core of the course. It is acceptable for students to work together and share resources on these projects. We are all learners and we can be greatly enriched by the ministry experiences of others.
3. Since this is a course in Youth Ministry, it is imperative that students engage in reading and be exposed to youth. It is greatly encouraged that students be actively involved in some aspect of youth ministry. Much of the course will focus on youth ministry from a congregational ministry perspective.
4. A *praxis* method of teaching will govern the class sessions. The continual interaction between theory and practice will be explored. Practical applications should be properly informed by educational theories.

VI. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Reading and Class Participation:
The intentional, ongoing personal formation of the minister is critical for ministry effectiveness. This necessarily involves reading and reflection. This course provides students with an opportunity for regular reading and reflection. The reading load is heavy, but it is essential for class participation. We are not after just the transmission of data, but rather transformative-learning. Simply put, if you haven't read the material, you won't be able to constructively engage in the discussion, and chances are you will not have the opportunity for personal and ministerial transformation. In addition to the required texts, I will provide a bibliography of supplemental readings that those of you who plan to be engaged in youth ministry as a primary portion of your ministry will want to read.

Attached to this syllabus is a reading form you will need to fill out showing what percentage of the reading you have done for class. It will be turned in at the end of the term and will count as 10% of your total grade. It will be graded as follows: 100% - 10 points; 90% - 9 points; 80% - 8 points and so on. **Due August 25, 2006.**

2. Class Attendance
Class attendance is required. If for some reason you cannot attend, notification should be given to the professor before class in writing (email preferably). Since this is an "intensive" class, any absence of class will negatively impact your final grade. It is your responsibility to obtain class lectures and information from peers in the class. "Excused absences" (as defined by the Dean's office) are not included in the above formula, however you should notify the professor each time an "excused

absence” occurs.

3. Book Review:

Write a five page review of the Ward text. Special attention should be given to how he approaches church from a theological perspective and how this ultimately impacts his practices of ministry. Critique it from the position of your own theological tradition and understanding of postmodernism and ecclesiology. DON'T just disagree with him because his ideas seem weird to you. Please see “How to Write a Book Review” by Joel Green and Brent Strawn located on First Class/Wilmore Campus/Help Desk/Resource Center for information of what a good book review looks like. **This book is to be read and the paper is due the day class begins on August 7, 2006.**

4. Group Presentations

The following list presents different types of youth ministry practices (based on the categories created by Kenda Dean and Ron Foster in *The Godbearing Life*). Affinity groups will choose one practice from the list and make a 30 minute presentation on it to the class. The presentation should demonstrate for the class what the practice would look like from a postmodern perspective. Grading for this project will be based on the following:

- * Ability to show how the practice can assist postmodern students.
- * Ability to dialogue with the class reading and lectures.
- * Ability to incorporate an understanding of adolescent development.
- * Ability to integrate a Wesleyan understanding of Scripture and theology.

Practices include:

- * Worship
- * Teaching and Nurture
- * Compassion
- * Communion
- * Witness
- * Dehabituatation

Class times will be given during the afternoons that students may work on their group projects. **Presentations will occur on August 10, 2006.**

5. Postmodern Critique

Write an 8-10 page paper that critically evaluates from a Wesleyan theological perspective the various viewpoints on postmodernism as discussed in class discussions and the readings. Specifically, address how Wesleyan theology should and can grapple with postmodernism as both a cultural issue and a theological issue, You will be graded not on which position of postmodernism you choose but your ability to defend that position theologically. **Due August 24, 2006.**

VII. COURSE GRADING PROCEDURES:

1. Final Grade Criteria

Reading Report	10%
Participation	10%
Book Review	20%
Group Project	30%
Postmodern Critique	<u>30%</u>
	100%

2. Grade Descriptions

I include the following information in order to provide clarification regarding the manner in which grades for this class will be determined, including the level of work, which corresponds to various grades.

First, in accordance with the seminary catalog, please note that a grade of B is given for work, which satisfactorily meets the parameters of a given assignment. More specifically, let us assume that in response to a particular assignment a paper is handed in which satisfactorily answers the questions raised by the assignment and which does so in a clear and articulate fashion and which, further, has relatively few errors in spelling or grammar. Such a paper would receive a grade of B. Please note that this means that I might return a paper with a letter of B assigned which has few or no errors marked and which has an ending comment such as “good, solid work”. In other words, the starting point for a relatively error-free paper is a grade of B.

Obviously, in the course of examining the response to a particular assignment, there are specific aspects of the work, which I consider in determining whether a higher or lower grade is appropriate. First, I consider the standards identified by the seminary for the relationship between assignments and their responses. Those standards are summarized below:

"A"-EXCEPTIONAL WORK (surpassing, markedly outstanding achievement of course objectives)

"B"-GOOD WORK (strong, significant achievement of course objectives)

"C"-ACCEPTABLE WORK (basic, essential achievement of course objectives)

"D"-MARGINAL WORK (inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives)

"F"-UNACCEPTABLE WORK (failure to achieve course objectives)

(Specific descriptions of “-” and “+” grades are not given, but may be judged to fall appropriately between the descriptions given above.)

While I cannot, for a number of reasons, give a precise indication of the number of points that would be deducted for specific ways in which a paper might be lacking, the following list summarizes certain things which might potentially result in a reduction in total score.

- | | |
|---|---|
| +Misspellings | +“Stream of consciousness” writing |
| +Incomplete sentences | +Answering a different question |
| +Grammatical errors | +Presentation of a weak conclusion |
| +Punctuation errors | +Presentation of a weak argument |
| +Poor overall structure | +Faulty logic |
| +Awkward constructions | +Failure to show strengths/weaknesses of argument |
| +Failure to interact critically with the material (if part of the assignment) | |

Similarly, I cannot give a precise indication of the number of points that would be added to a paper for going beyond “good, solid work”. However, following is a list of the sorts of things that would evidence going beyond the basic assignment and would, therefore, warrant a higher total score for the response.

- +Writing that is particularly articulate and/or worded with exceptional clarity and concision.
- +Particularly insightful interaction with the material, including exceptional criticisms or the

- recognition of the more profound implications of certain positions.
- +Presentation, which moves beyond mere repetition of the arguments of others.
- +Evidence of research that goes beyond what is required for the assignment.
- +Conclusions which effectively summarize criticisms and which propose solutions.
- +Critical interaction, which probes deeply into the arguments at hand.

3. Grade Assignments

Some assignments lend themselves better to scoring by numerical assessment rather than by assigning a letter grade initially. Of course, these numerical scorings must be converted to letter grades for recording at the end of the semester. I offer the following breakdown of my numerical scoring system to allow you to track their correspondence to letter grades as you wish.

A	=	94-100
A-	=	90-93
B+	=	87-89
B	=	84-86
B-	=	80-83
C+	=	77-79
C	=	74-76
C-	=	70-73
D+	=	67-69
D	=	64-66
D-	=	60-63
F	=	0-59

With these guidelines in place, I commit to give my best effort to assessing your work in accordance with these standards and in a fair and impartial fashion. In the course of the semester, if you should have any questions about the grade assigned for any particular assignment, please do not hesitate to contact me for further discussion.

4. Promptness

All papers and reports should be turned in on the scheduled dates. All work is due at class time. **Any work turned in late will receive a deduction of one letter grade per day that it is late. No work will be accepted later than one week from the date it was due. [NOTE: This does not apply to the Group Presentations since this is a group activity. This will be presented on the date due or a failing grade for the project will be earned.] Papers may be emailed to the professor in order to meet the due date.**

The instructor will provide both “timely” and “substantive” feedback to students regarding their assignments. “Timely” response means that for assessments of student work during the course of the academic term, the professor will have work marked, graded, and returned within one week of its submission; if the class has more than 40 students, the professor may take up to two weeks. In addition, the professor will provide “substantive” feedback that alerts students to what they have done well and how they might improve their performance in subsequent work.

Late papers will not receive written feedback, nor is the professor bound to meet the one week turnaround.

5. Special Accommodation: Students needing special accommodations for this class should notify the professor during the first day of the course.

VIII. PROGRAMMING CALENDAR AND COURSE OUTLINE

NOTE: As a general rule, assignments and due dates will not vary from this schedule. Any changes will be announced in advance of the due dates for assignments.

DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
Aug. 7	Course / syllabus overview Module 1: What is postmodernism and why should I care? Historical/theological/cultural examination. Module 2: What does a postmodern student look like and what difference does it make? Looking at how adolescent faith formation is changing, and the ways culture influences this.	Book review of <i>Liquid Church</i> due
8	Module 3: Do We Need Youth Ministry Any More? Can youth ministry continue to function in a postmodern world, and if so, how? Module 4: Postmodern ways of doing church. The possibilities and limits of postmodern ministry.	Read Zahniser Article
9	Module 4 cont. Module 5: Practice or Theory: It's not an either/or but a both/and (also known as praxis)	
10	Module 6: Creating Balance in Ministry: Remember, the church still has a lot of moderns too. How do we practice postmodern ministry and not lose our moderns along the way? Group Presentations	Read Baker article and Roebben article

IX. Rubrics

A. Rubric for Papers

For “A” level work, the essay:

- +Clearly and concisely states the thesis or question to be undertaken.
- +No grammatical errors or infelicitous constructions or misspellings.
- +Presents its argument in an exemplary fashion, particularly as regards concision and clarity.
- +Draws a powerful conclusion that clearly relates the argument to the thesis.
- +Contains minimal to no distractive material.
- +Demonstrates clear evidence of deep and substantive reflection.
- +Demonstrates exemplary research and use of sources.

For “B” level work, the essay:

- +Clearly states the thesis or question to be undertaken.
- +Contains few grammatical errors or infelicitous constructions or misspellings.
- +Presents its argument in a reasonably clear and concise fashion.
- +Draws a substantive conclusion that relates the argument to the thesis.
- +Contains minimal distractive material.
- +Demonstrates clear evidence of substantive reflection.
- +Demonstrates cautious and substantive research and use of sources.

For “C” level work, the essay:

- +Attempts to clearly state the thesis or question to be undertaken.
- +Contains frequent grammatical errors or infelicitous constructions or misspellings.
- +Presents its argument in a fashion that is hard to follow and exhibits too much “subjectivity” (i.e., becomes more of an opinion piece).
- +Attempts to conclude in a fashion that relates the argument to the thesis.
- +Contains significant distractive material.
- +Demonstrates little evidence of substantive reflection.
- +Demonstrates little evidence of substantive research

For “D/F” level work, the essay:

- +Largely fails to identify a thesis or question.
- +Contains many grammatical errors/ infelicitous constructions/misspellings.
- +Presents little to no argument, and is mostly an opinion piece.
- +Draws no meaningful conclusion.
- +Minimal or no evidence of substantive reflection or research.

B. Rubric for Group Project